



## **Demand High: Seminar Pack 1**

### **A short introduction to “Demand High”**

#### **What is this Seminar Pack?**

This is a set of materials and procedural instructions to help you run an in-service training seminar for language teachers to (a) introduce some of the ideas behind “Demand High” (b) get some discussion going about “Demand High”.

You can use the materials exactly as they are presented here or adapt them for your own context. The seminar giver does not need to be passionately convinced by the notion of DH, but simply interested in sparking off new and exploratory conversations amongst teachers

#### **Who might want to use this Seminar Pack?**

It is aimed at Trainers, Directors or Studies, Academic managers, interested Teachers etc who would like to offer an in-service training session.

#### **What audience would the seminar have?**

The audience is assumed to be language teachers who have had initial training in language teaching (e.g. CELTA, Introductory certificate, MA In TESOL etc), and have had a minimum of a few months post-qualification teaching work. It is most suitable for audiences of experienced teachers. It should be suitable for inclusion in on-going staff INSETT programmes, internal weekly/monthly seminars, Delta input sessions and discussions, meetings for teachers to exchange ideas etc

The seminar is mainly pitched at teachers of English but, with small adaptations could also be useful with teachers of other languages.

#### **How long will the seminar take?**

The seminar will take between 45 and 75 minutes (depending on how much time you allow for the discussions). As with most developmental activities it will have more impact if there are some follow-up stages e.g. making use of the task at the end of the session to initiate classroom observation and experiments, followed by a further meeting to share experiences and to see whether and how to take it further.

#### **What is included?**

- 1 A short “Background briefing” for the trainer (in this document)
- 2 Seminar plan – procedural notes and guidance for discussions (in this document)
- 3 Handouts to print out (in this document)
- 4 A Powerpoint file (separately)
- 5 A short video recording



## **Demand High: Seminar Pack 1**

### **Background briefing for the Trainer**

#### **What is Demand High?**

It's a proposal originally put forward in March 2012 by Jim Scrivener and Adrian Underhill. Since then it has been discussed at many conferences internationally and the originators have run seminars and workshops in different places.

The authors said that they were asking four key questions:

- Are our learners capable of much more?
- Have the tasks and techniques we use in class become rituals and ends in themselves?
- How can we stop “covering material” and start focusing on the potential for deep learning?
- What small shifts in attitude and tweaks in techniques can we make to change the whole focus of our teaching towards getting more learning happening?

The answer to those questions is not fixed. The authors suggest that by asking those questions we begin an on-going process of enquiry so that we can find new ways of getting much greater depth of tangible engagement and learning in what we do.

The authors have tried to emphasise a number of things:

- It is not a “new method”. Rather it is a set of adjustments to whatever method or approach the teacher is currently using in class.
- It is not anti any method. It is not anti-Communicative Approach. It is not anti-dogme. It is not anti-Task Based Learning. The proposal is that, whatever you do in class, might be susceptible to a higher challenge, improvement, a re-focussing.

At the moment, the authors have grouped these shifts and tweaks under the working name of “Demand-High” – but they are aware that the enquiry may open up new ideas and may lead to a change of direction.

Demand-High does not propose some return to “traditional” teaching and that “Demand High” means making everything more “difficult”

Demand-High is not the traditional idea of making things more difficult in ways that did not help the majority of students (e.g. setting exercises that were too hard). When teachers did that they were probably trying to help, but were out of touch with our learning needs and therefore caused us to struggle, and with limited result. This is un-doable demand.

In contrast, the authors are proposing a demand that comes precisely at the point where the learner is capable of making their next steps forward – and helping them to meet that demand, rather than avoiding it. This is doable demand.

Some questions that might be useful for teachers to investigate via classroom experiment:

- How can I push my students to upgrade their language and improve their skills more than they believed possible?
- How can I gain real learning value from classroom activities that have become tired or familiar?
- What teacher interventions make a real difference?
- How can I shift my preoccupation from “successful task” to “optimal learning”?
- How can we transform BOTH “undoable” or AND “low” demands into “doable demands”?
- What is the minimum tweak necessary at any point in any lesson to shift the activity sideways into the “challenge zone”?
- What attitude and action changes would lead to “Demand-High” teaching in my classroom?
- What is the demand on a teacher to become a “Demand High” teacher?



## Demand High: Seminar Pack 1

### Seminar Plan

#### Stage 1: Looking at a lesson activity

1.1 (4 minutes)

Explain that the session is going to look at an idea known as “Demand High”. Say that you will explain what this means later on in the session.

Ask participants:

*Think of a fairly “normal”, relatively simple exercise or activity that you have recently worked on with students in class (i.e. we are not looking for amazing, unusual or complex activity ideas). It should involve elements of both grammar and speaking.*

*Write down a few notes about the basic procedural steps of what you did in class e.g.*

- (1) Asked students to get into pairs*
- (2) Asked students to discuss answers to coursebook exercise on comparatives*
- (3) Asked students to compare answers with the pair next to them*
- (4) Went through answers with the whole class*

Allow a short time for participants to choose their activity and make their brief notes.

1.2 (10 - 15 minutes)

Ask participants to make pairs. Tell them that they are going to first describe their activities briefly and factually to each other.

After each description, the listener should ask the following questions to the speaker. Both can discuss answers and make brief notes for reporting back.

- *Did all students learn something? How do you know that they learnt something?*
- *Were the learners really pushed hard to substantially improve?*

#### Stage 2: “A Large Undemand”

2.1 (10 - 15 minutes)

Tell participants that they will watch a very short video clip of Adrian Underhill. Ask them to note down any phrases or chunks of language from his comments that seem to capture an important point from his argument (whether or not you agree with them).

Show video clip A. (You may wish to play it twice)

Ask participants (in the same pairs) to compare the chunks they noted and to use these to start discussing whether they think that the ideas raised resonate in their experience or not.

While they are talking, distribute Handout A with the transcript.

As the conversation dies down, ask them to focus on “Task: Looking at your lesson from outside” at the bottom of the page and discuss it.

### Transcript of Adrian Underhill video clip

So ... I've had the happy experience in recent years of doing a lot of classroom observing, perhaps more than I've done for quite some while – and what I have to say is ... In nearly all cases the teachers are friendly and pleasant, the lesson is well prepared, the materials are certainly 'interesting' and 'colourful', and the activities are 'interactive' and the students are happy beyond measure, I would say; they are really pleased to be there. All this notwithstanding I have been struck by one constant feature, so it seems to me: that the students are under-challenged. They could be doing more than they are doing. The level might be right, but the demand compared with what humans are capable of, is low, I can't help feeling that. The teacher is, somehow or other, satisfied with less, and, I believe, the students subtly notice this. Everyone means well, but there is a large undemand and this ultimately catastrophic blind spot means that the students are doing less than they could be and get used to doing less than they could be.

#### 2.2 (5-10 minutes)

Bring the class together. Listen to some of their ideas for making activities more challenging.

Participants may at this stage come up with relatively conventional ideas (e.g. variations on an activity) and things that simply make things more “difficult” (e.g. by asking tougher questions). Focus the participants on issues like:

- *How do you know if learning has happened in an activity?*
- *What sort of thing do think Adrian might mean by “they could be doing more”*
- *How do you think the concept of “challenge” might be different from just “making things more difficult”?*
- *Do the extra ideas you thought of (in the worksheet task) add a doable challenge to the work?*

There is no right answer to this task. The conversation and the thinking involved are useful.

Note: On the subject of “challenge” versus “demand”, see the briefing notes at the start of this document. Adrian and Jim distinguish between “undoable demand” where teachers deliberately make things difficult and hard to achieve and “doable demand” (i.e. challenge) where teachers aim to continually offer a series of small “nudges” that might help each individual to keep moving forward at the edges of their current territory.

### Stage 3: Introducing Demand High

3.1 (10-15 minutes)

Whole class: Show the PowerPoint. Of course, you can use the script as given below (see the “possible Trainer Commentary” column in the table below) – or your own words.

Slide 1: (Title slide)

Slide 2: Demand High Questions

### Demand-High Questions

Demand High asks:

- Have the tasks and techniques I use in class become rituals and ends in themselves?
- Am I under-challenging my students?
- Are my learners capable of much more?
- Would my students learn more if I demanded more of them? How could I do that?
- How can I stop “covering material” and start focusing on the potential for deep learning?
- What small shifts in attitude and tweaks and adjustments to techniques can I make to transform the whole focus of my teaching towards getting learning happening?

#### Trainer Notes for the Powerpoint slide

Introduce the Powerpoint by saying that:

Demand High is an idea proposed by Jim Scrivener and Adrian Underhill, two authors and trainers. It isn't a finished thing – more of an ongoing series of questions and provisional answers.

To start with they have asked a few important questions. (Show slide line by line). Use the comments column below to expand on ideas.

Slide	Possible Trainer Commentary
<i>Have the tasks and techniques I use in class become rituals and ends in themselves?</i>	Is it possible that we have become so used to doing the activities we are familiar with (e.g. group discussions, pair work information gaps, going through feedback after students have done an exercise etc) that we don't notice that some of these have become “ritualised” – that many teachers operate them as if simply following all the steps is enough to ensure that learning will ensue.
<i>Am I under-challenging my students?</i>	Do I ask less of my students than they can do? If so, why is this?
<i>Are my learners capable of much more?</i>	Do they expect less of themselves? Have we all lulled ourselves into a belief that they will never be better than “half-good”?
<i>Would my students learn more if I demanded more of them? How could I do that?</i>	Is part of the problem to do with my own expectations? Do I believe that can only achieve a certain amount – and therefore only ask that much?

<p><i>How can I stop “covering material” and start focusing on the potential for deep learning?</i></p>	<p>Do I feel under constant pressure to “cover” material i.e. moving through exercises and pages at speed in order to fulfil requirements or expectations from the department manager, school, parents, ministry etc? Is there a way to stop “turning pages” and start to notice what the real learning pace of my students is – and start going more at that speed?</p>
<p><i>What small shifts in attitude and tweaks and adjustments to techniques can I make to transform the whole focus of my teaching towards getting learning happening?</i></p>	<p>Are there any shifts in attitude or tweaks in my classroom techniques that might make a substantial difference to how much students learn?</p>

3.2 (As long as you have!) Use the slide to encourage a short conversation across the group under these 6 headings. If time is limited, select one or two to dwell on. Discuss any issues arising as appropriate.

3.3 (5-10 minutes)

Close the session by asking participants to research these ideas further in their own classes.

Distribute Handout B – or show the next Powerpoint slide: Two questions for practical research.

PowerPoint Slide 3: Two questions for Practical Research

### Two questions for practical research

Keep these questions in mind while you are teaching over the next week. Make some notes of your observations and thoughts about your classes.

#### One

Are there any moments in your lesson where you seem to be more **held up** in the **pace** of the activity (e.g. collecting in answers individually, grouping people, logistical arrangements, instructions, points, the “fun” or “game” of it) rather than taking the time to explore deeper into the **learning** that the activity has the potential to open up?

#### Two

Are there any moments in a lesson where it was (or might have been) possible, in any way, to explore “where the learning is going on” a little more – perhaps at the expense of moving on faster or covering so much content as they hoped?

What, precisely, do you do (or could you have done) to explore deeper into the real movements of **learning**?

(Bring your observations back to a future meeting for discussion!)

Tell participants that they are going to explore some of these ideas in their own teaching in the next few days. Ask them to read the tasks - then discuss in pairs: (a) which class they will do this with (b) when they will do it (c) how they will record some of their insights.

Say when the follow-up meeting will be when they can come back and discuss their findings.

We would really like to know if this seminar (and any of our other materials) are of any use!

Please send in feedback, corrections, suggestions, amendments, additions, reports on how it worked (or didn't). We are also keen to invite you to submit your own materials for use on the website.

You can write a comment directly on the blog– or email Jim and Adrian at:

[demandhighelt@gmail.com](mailto:demandhighelt@gmail.com)



## Handout A: What is Demand High?



“So ... I've had the happy experience in recent years of doing a lot of classroom observing, perhaps more than I've done for quite some while – and what I have to say is ...

In nearly all cases the teachers are friendly and pleasant, the lesson is well prepared, the materials are certainly 'interesting' and 'colourful', and the activities are 'interactive' and the students are happy beyond measure, I would say; they are really pleased to be there.

All this notwithstanding I have been struck by one constant feature, so it seems to me: that the students are under-challenged. They could be doing more than they are doing. The level might be right, but the demand compared with what humans are capable of, is low, I can't help feeling that. The teacher is, somehow or other, satisfied with less, and, I believe, the students subtly notice this.

Everyone means well, but there is a large undemand and this ultimately catastrophic blind spot means that the students are doing less than they could be and get used to doing less than they could be.”

(Adrian Underhill)

### **Task: Looking at your lesson from outside**

Think back to the activity you described earlier and imagine that an observer has watched you doing it in class. He / she noted many positive aspects of your teaching – but also said that they noted places where you could have made a higher demand in what you expected and asked of the students.

List one or more concrete things you or your students could have done (as part of the activity) that might have greatly increased the amount of challenge to the learners and substantially, tangibly improved their understanding of or skill in the language.



## Handout B: Practical Tasks

### Two questions for practical research

Keep these questions in mind while you are teaching over the next week. Make some notes of your observations and thoughts about your classes.

#### One

Are there any moments in your lesson where you seem to be more tied up in the mechanics of the activity (e.g. collecting in answers ritualistically, grouping people, logistical arrangements, instructions, points, the “fun” or “game” of it all etc) rather than taking the time to explore deeper into the learning that the activity has the potential to open up?

#### Two

Are there any moments in a lesson where it was (or might have been) possible, in any way, to explore “where the learning is going on” a little more – perhaps at the expense of moving on faster or covering as much content as you hoped.

What, precisely, did you do (or could you have done) to explore deeper into the real moves of learning?

*Bring your observations back to a future meeting for discussion!*